

3-27-20 Having a purpose

I have to say I've been very proud of the town of Halifax for providing services to residents and visitors while the building is closed to the public. The phone numbers for all the departments are listed on a large board, people can drop off items such as checks into the locked mailbox which has always been there. Inside the town hall we are answering the phone and responding to emails.

In the Board of Health, we are taking pictures of documents and or scanning in more documents than usual so that we can email or text information to people.

While I have been out recently at perc tests and inspections and can do so while maintaining the appropriate distance from others, the COVID-19 crisis has created a time crunch and I've had to create and accept different ways of conducting business. That means it might be a consultant going in my place. Depending on the circumstance, I might accept a video and photographs as a record of work.

I'm so fortunate that we have good teamwork in Halifax, and we stay in touch daily on this topic. We are making plans for working at home when and if that is necessary.

While it is challenging keeping up with this fast moving quickly evolving situation, there was something that Governor Baker said on Monday that I really liked as he announced that only essential services could be open and other places had to close their doors. He talked about how the sense of purpose keeps us going; it is what we live for. And while we might not be able to eat inside a restaurant or travel or congregate as we used to, we have a different purpose now. Our purpose now is to follow instructions and guidance in order to slow the spread of this pandemic and save lives. (These are not quotes. This the gist of his comments.)

It is now more critical than ever to take our safety measures seriously including sanitation and social distancing. When people use their extra time that they now have by ignoring those safety measures, this sadly puts so many people at risk.

You may have seen the footage of young people on college spring break having a blast, feeling invincible and putting all safety measures aside. There is some of that activity going on locally even if it doesn't make the news. I'm hearing stories of people bringing their children to Petco just to have the amusement of looking at the animals. I'm hearing stories of restaurants having “private” and sometimes quite large, gatherings inside the closed restaurant, where they are eating and drinking. That is not the same as a family dining together. It is restaurant owners ignoring a state order and allowing the public to congregate, putting us all at risk.

We're down to essential services now and the list of those services is quite long. I can only hope that there is widespread understanding that essential means vital, indispensable, important, crucial, critical, and necessary.

I can only hope that there is widespread agreement with the Governor's plea that we all understand the role we can play by taking on the purpose of protecting ourselves and others.

I'm reminded of the times, and we will probably face this again this coming summer, when evening outdoor activities are cancelled due to the high risk of eastern equine encephalitis. While there is something to be said for controlled activities where use of repellent can be enforced, there are times when it is decided the risk is too high and activities are canceled. I have seen with my own eyes, parents with young children outdoors after dusk and teens riding their bicycles, getting together at parks etc. While that risk is theirs to choose, at least mosquito borne diseases do not spread from one person to another.

This pandemic gives us a much larger picture where we can, in fact, make a difference by our behaviors. By following the state's mandates, by not going to work if we are not an essential employee and or business, by not congregating, by maintaining our social distancing and using good hygiene habits we can fulfill that purpose of doing things differently for the greater good of all .

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